

Letters 1916–1923

Ordinary Lives – Extraordinary Times



Part II

Researching the 1916-1923 Period

For these case studies, you will use, in addition to Letters 1916-1923, other digital resources such as the 1911 Irish census records. For this part of the treasure hunt, you will need to figure out where to find the information you need.

Case study – Irish soldiers in the First World War

- 1 Go to "the Letters 1916-1923 search engine" and search for the letter from Richard Perceval Maxwell to Colonel Robert David Perceval Maxwell, 25 April 1916.

What is the relationship between the two men?

What does Richard Perceval Maxwell relate about his role in the British army?

- 2 On 7 October 1916, Richard Perceval Maxwell wrote another letter to Robert David Perceval Maxwell. This time, he is involved in military action but also describes some of the joys he and his fellow soldiers' experience.

What are the events that make the soldiers happy?

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- 3 The website www.findagrave.com is a global resource of burial records. Try to find Richard Perceval Maxwell in that database. It helps to spell his surname “Perceval-Maxwell”.

When did he die and where was he buried?

- 4 Return to the "**the Letters 1916-1923 database**" site and read the account of a WWI battle sent by Wilfrid Bliss Spender to his wife Lillian Spender on 2 July 1916.

What weapons and possible injuries resulting from them are mentioned in the letter?

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- 5 Go to www.wikipedia.org and look for the weaponry and injuries you have identified in Spender’s letter.

What are they?

- 6 The website www.greatwar.co.uk is a guide to the First World War battlefields and offers advice to genealogists trying to find ancestors who were members of the British Army. Use the navigation bar on the right-hand side to go to the “Researching Military History” section. Look at the timeline of events in 1916 (<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/timeline/ww1-events-1916.htm>) and try to find out what battle Spender could have been involved in when he was writing to his wife from France.

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7 Women also played an important part in the British war effort. Especially female members of the upper classes with independent means who organised charities to support soldiers at the front, or in prisoner of war camps abroad. One of the Irish noblewomen who helped the British Army was Lady Clonbrock. Go to "**the Letters 1916-1923 database**" and find the letter she received from Major E. G. Hamilton, dated 1 August 1916.

What is Hamilton's army unit?

Where is he stationed?

Why does he write to Lady Clonbrock?

8 Read the Wikipedia article about the "Mesopotamian campaign" and answer the following questions:

What country does Mesopotamia belong to today?

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Why were Irish soldiers stationed there during the First World War?

- 9 Go to the website of the Imperial War Museum (www.iwm.org.uk) and use the search engine on the top of the page. If you search for “Connaught Rangers”, you will find several photographs of Connaught Rangers on active service in Mesopotamia and elsewhere.

What is depicted in these photographs?

- 10 In the "**the Letters 1916-1923 database**" you will find other letters from Connaught Rangers to Lady Clonbrock.

What are their names?

Where are they writing from?

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